

ORGANIC NEWS

Organic Ag Seminar Jan. 26

Organic cotton and peanut producers are invited to attend the Organic Cotton/Peanut Production Seminar to be held on **Wednesday, January 26** at the Seminole Community Center in Seminole. Registration will begin at 8 am and the program will start at 8:30 am and last till 3 pm. The program includes a sponsored lunch and four continuing education credits (1 laws and 3 IPM). To attend preregister by text – 979.571.2086.

The seminar will feature several well-known speakers in the organic peanut industry. Dr. Emi Kimura, Extension Agronomist will discuss organic cotton varieties and production. John Cason, AgriLife Peanut Researcher and Dylan Wann, IPG Peanut Breeder will discuss organic peanut varieties and production. Cecilia Monclova, Extension Plant Pathologist will discuss organic seedling diseases and the problems with cotton FOV 4 disease. These speakers will then form a panel to discuss organic cotton and peanut production issues with growers. This will be followed by Katie Lewis, AgriLife Researcher discussing soil organic matter, carbon, cover crops and overall soil health.

After a sponsored lunch the program will switch to “Organic Certification Issues and How to Avoid Them,” by Brandi Chandler, Organic Certification Program Coordinator at TDA. Pancho Abello and Will Keeling, AgriLife Ag Economists will follow with organic crop budgets to use in crop planning. Justin Tuggle, Crop Consultant will address the common agronomic issues in organic crops in 2021 followed by Pancho Abello, Extension Economist giving farmers an Organic Crop Outlook for 2022.

Sponsors for the Organic Cotton/Peanut Production Seminar include the Texas Peanut

Producers Board, Certis Bio, South Plains Compost, IPG Seed, Trico Peanut, Helena Agri-Enterprises, Algrano Peanut Shelling, Valent USA, Aqua-Yield & Texas Earth, New Deal Grain, Kunafin “the Insectary”, Viatrac Fertilizer, Wilco Peanut, and BH Genetics.

B.I.G. Conference includes Organic Horticulture

The 60th Blackland Income Growth Conference will be held January 11-12 at the Extraco Events Center in Waco. The two-day event has a lot of programs on almost anything in agriculture and includes an equipment show.

If interested in organic horticulture there will be two topics that will help you in your organic vegetable, fruit or nut operation. Dr. Jake Mowrer will present information on Soil Health followed by [Bob Whitney discussing the organic program and using IPM in organic horticulture.](#) To register or for more information call the District 8 Extension Center at (254) 974-9433.



Two Rice Meetings in January

Rice producers will have two opportunities to learn more about rice production and get their private applicator CEU's.

The Western Rice Belt Production Conference will be held at the El Campo Civic Center on Wednesday, January 19 starting with registration at 7:30 am and program starts at 8:10 am and lasts till after 2 pm. 2 TDA CEU's will be given.

Speakers include Rice Variety Performance, RiceTec, Horizon Ag, and Dynagro; Rice dryer variety data, Corrie Bowen; Row Rice Production, Jarrod Hardke; Carbon Credit Economics, Luis Ribera; TDA Laws and Regs, Stephanie Theriot; Farm Policy Update, George Knapke; and Rice Market Update, Thomas Wynn.

The Southeast Texas Rice Symposium will be held at the Winnie-Stowell Community Building on Thursday, January 20 from 8:15 am to 2 pm. RSVP by January 14.

Topics include USRPA Update, Marcela Garcia; Louisiana Rice Update, Ronnie Levy; Volatility of Input Costs, Thomas Wynn; Rice Varieties, RiceTec & Horizon Ag; Rice Diseases, Young Ki Jo; Regional Weather Outlook, Patrick Vaughn; Carbon Credit Economics, Dr. Luis Ribera.

I look forward to meeting you at these two rice meetings!

Organic Rice Varieties?



The title is a little misleading since there are no specific organic rice varieties – at least not yet! There are several commercially available rice varieties that are planted by organic rice growers on a consistent basis simply because they have done well in an organic system. According to most organic growers two varieties seem to be planted more than most – RiceTec XL723 and RT7401.

RT7401 is a fairly new variety but is catching on quick while XL723 has been around several years and is known to produce in organic conditions. In fact, RiceTec promotes both as working well in organic conditions. Nutrien's Dyna-Gro Seed introduced DG-263L this past year and has had mixed results. Talking to Dr. Qiming Shao with Nutrien, he



thinks DG-263L should do well in an organic system and recommends it.

So, are there organic rice varieties? Not really, but there are some really good commercial varieties for organic rice growers to choose!

Weed Seed Mill, Seed Terminator, Chaff Lining, Chaff Carts?

These are all names used to describe one of the newest non-herbicide weed control method being looked at by just about every producer but especially organic producers.



Essentially these units are attached to the back of a combine and crush, shear, pulverize or place in a small row or load on a trailer all the weed seeds. They work really well with a grain header but are being adapted to corn or other headers as well. I am sure you have seen a careless weed hit the header, throw off the seeds and then make its way into the combine. According to the companies that make this equipment, those seeds get destroyed as they make their way out the back. Considering 500,000 seed in one careless weed plant this sounds interesting!

Northwest Panhandle Ag Conference - Dalhart

Producers in the High Plains of Texas will be attending the Northwest Panhandle Ag Conference to be held on **Thursday, January 27** at the Rita Blanca Coliseum in Dalhart. Registration begins at 8:30 am and the program starts at 9 am and includes TDA CEU's and a sponsored lunch.

Speakers include Irrigation Efficiency, David Parker; IPM Highlights in Crops, Kerry Siders; Organic Crop Production, Bob Whitney; Late Season Corn Disease, Ken Obasa; Possible Soybean Production, Sheila Quirk; Herbicide Selection, Application and Resistance, Kevin Hefflin; Alternative Crop Options, Calvin Trostle; Residue

Management for Soil Health, Soil Water & Nutrient Availability and Capturing Carbon, Katie Lewis;
Emerging Economics and Market Outlook, DeDe Jones.

There is increasing organic production and demand in this vital agriculture area.

Deadline Extended for Pandemic Support for Certified Organic and Transitioning Operations

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has extended the deadline for agricultural producers who are certified organic, or transitioning to organic, to apply for the Organic and Transitional Education and Certification Program. This program provides pandemic assistance to cover certification and education expenses. The deadline to apply for 2020 and 2021 eligible expenses is now **Feb. 4, 2022**.

What's covered? 25% of a certified operation's eligible certification expenses, up to \$250 per certification category. Crop and livestock operations transitioning to organic production may be eligible for 75% of a transitional operation's eligible expenses, up to \$750, for each year. 75% of the registration fees, up to \$200, per year, for educational events that include content related to organic production and handling in order to assist operations in increasing their knowledge of production and marketing practices that can improve their operations, increase resilience and expand available marketing opportunities. Additionally, both certified and transitional operations may be eligible for 75% of the **expense of soil testing** required under the National Organic Program (NOP) to document micronutrient deficiency, not to exceed \$100 per year.

I know that none of this adds up to a lot of money, but I have been told that the application is easy to complete and sign! Let me know if that's true??



Organic Corn Stalk Rot Disease

This picture may look like a “just harvested” corn field and it is, but with a very important difference. This field is suffering from a severe case of stalk rot!

What is stalk rot? It is a disease of the stalk that really shows up or let's say, gets worse as the stalk is maturing or just before grain harvest. This disease can be the result of either a fungus or a bacterium infecting the plant but getting worse as the plant goes through some sort of stress. That said, every year in almost every field of corn, there is stalk rot in some parts of the field. The disease is not hardly noticeable most years, but sometimes in some fields like this one, it can be almost 100% of the field.

According to corn publications “Stalk rot diseases tend to be more common in higher yielding hybrids that produce large, heavy ears. During times of stress, such as when foliar disease causes substantial loss of leaf area, these large ears may cannibalize carbohydrates from the stalk and weaken it.”

Of course, a plant that is weakened but with heavy ears will lodge or fall over making harvest difficult or impossible.

If you look closely at the picture, you can see that most of these plants and ears did not make it through the combine because they were already on the ground. One

practice, to prevent so much loss, is to be scouting fields early checking to see if stalks are weak or prone to break over. If there is significant damage starting to show up then harvest as soon as possible.

Scouting is as simple as pushing stalks to see if they lean or fall!

Unfortunately, or fortunately, this was a great corn year with great yields. This great year may have set up the plants for stress which allowed the fungi (probably fusarium) to invade plant stalks causing stalk rot.



Tx Organic Farmers & Gardeners Association Meeting – January 27

Just a reminder that the TOFGA meeting will be held in Georgetown, TX January 27-29. Cost to attend depends on your membership level but is \$175-\$250 per person. TOFGA.org is the website.

Use Beneficials in Organics!



I ask organic producers on a regular basis if they use beneficials in their organic program. The answer is almost always no or not yet! Why not? Beneficial insects are not glamorous or fast acting but if used properly they can be a super way to keep crop insect pests at very low numbers.

A few things to keep in mind. First, maintain good soil health and fertility. Plants that are growing well without stress are able to resist pests and have a natural Systemic Acquired Resistance (SAR) to both disease and insects – when healthy. Second, choose well adapted varieties with known resistance or least some tolerance. Organic varieties or even commercial varieties are now bred with these traits or should be! Third, talk now with beneficial suppliers and get your account set up for shipment. Beneficial insects should be distributed ahead of a potential problem and companies know this and are ready to help you with scheduling. Know what insects you think will be a problem and let your supplier know to be ready and fourth, don't think that because you didn't see the pests that you didn't need the beneficials. Fifth, check your crops often, especially near harvest to see what pests were in your crop even if the damage was not severe. This type of scouting will give you information to prevent any future problems.

Here is a list of just a few companies.

[Koppert Biological Systems \(koppertus.com\)](http://koppertus.com)
[Biobest Group biobestgroup.com](http://biobestgroup.com)

[Bioline Agrosiences](https://www.biolineagrosiences.com)

<https://www.biolineagrosiences.com>

[Applied Bionomics](https://www.appliedbionomics.com) <https://www.appliedbionomics.com>

[Beneficial Insectary](https://www.insectary.com) <https://www.insectary.com>

[Kunafin](https://www.kunafin.com) <https://www.kunafin.com>

Biological Metabolites

I don't want to go too deep into this subject but for organic producers I do get questions about organic fungicide or insecticide effectiveness – do they kill what they should kill?

This answer is mixed but overall, yes, they do kill what they should but sometimes not in the way we expect. Many of the products we use in organic production for crop protection are secondary metabolites of some organism. These metabolites can function in many ways in plants to either bolster the plants SAR or to increase hormone production for improved growth or actually inhibit or prevent a fungal or bacterial disease from growing. So, the statement “it depends” is really true. These metabolites may be specific to a crop or insect or disease so knowing the product and the problem well is the first step to making the choice of product.

So, yes, they are great products and generally work well even if they are expensive. Now what's coming down the road? The next breakthrough in organics may be naturally occurring endophytes that actually go into cells and begin to play havoc with cell DNA or cell processes so that they can't grow or won't produce seed or even roots! More to come....

Staying in touch...

I have worked with farmers for exactly 40 years professionally this year. That said I know farmers don't like to be bothered by just about anything.

As your Extension Organic Specialist, I am trying to make sure organic farmers have the latest information available in organic agriculture or agriculture in general. There is no way to possibly put all that information in a four-page newsletter, so I use a website, a blog, Facebook, twitter, LinkedIn, and email if I have your email - **just trying to stay in touch!**

Bob Whitney
Extension Organic Specialist